

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 USIA-06 DHA-02 INR-07 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 CIAE-00 TRSE-00 SS-15 /047 W

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P R 150420Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7553

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 1614

JAKARTA PLEASE PASS TO ASST. SECRETARY HOLBROOKE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, SHUM, SOPN, SN

SUBJECT: EMBASSY COMMENT ON ANDELMAN'S NYT ARTICLE OF APRIL 9

REF: STATE 80986

1. ANDELMAN HAS ATTEMPTED TO PRODUCE COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON RECENT SERIES OF GOS LEGAL ACTIONS AND DETENTIONS. HOWEVER, IN EFFORT TO DEVELOP HIS THESIS, "SINGAPORE PUSHING A STERN DRIVE TO SILENCE CRTTICS AND DISSIDENTS", ANDELMAN HAS WRITTEN AN ARTICLE WHICH STRIKES US AS LACKING IN BALANCE DUE TO VARIOUS INACCURACIES AND DISTORTIONS.

2. WE WISH TO MAKE FOLLOWING GENERAL POINTS ON SUBJECT ARTICLE:

A. RECENT EVENTS ARE RECOUNTED MORE OR LESS IN A VACUUM; HISTORICAL AND SOCIETAL CONTEXT IS TREATED IN CURSORY FASHION; AND ONLY MENTION OF COMMUNIST THREAT TO SINGAPORE IS CONTAINED IN BRIEF QUOTES FROM DEPUTY PM GOH KENG SWEE AND AN OFFICIAL GOS SOURCE.

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B. CRIMINAL DEFAMATION PROSECUTIONS, CIVIL DEFAMATION LAWSUITS, AS WELL AS DETENTIONS ON COMMUNAL AND SUBVERSIVE GROUNDS ARE LUMPED TOGETHER. ALL OF THESE EVENTS ARE DEPICTED AS PART OF A DELIBERATE AND UNITARY GOS "CAMPAIGN".

C. REPRESSION OF REGIME'S OPPONENTS IS REPRESENTED  
AS AIM OF GOS "CAMPAIGN".

3. IN SUM, BY IGNORING SINGAPORE'S SECURITY NEEDS, ANDELMAN CONVEYS IMPRESSION THAT GOS INTERNAL SECURITY APPARATUS EXISTS TO STIFLE LEGITIMATE DISSENT AND TO MUZZLE CRITICS OF REGIME. THIS IS CLEARLY MISLEADING. WHAT IS TROUBLING TO THE EMBASSY AND TO MANY ELEMENTS OF THE SINGAPORE POLITY IS APPARENT MODIFICATION OF THE GOS' UTILIZATION OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY ACT (ISA). ISA HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN LIMITED TO CASES OF DEMONSTRABLE SUBVERSION OR INCITEMENT OF COMMUNAL TENSIONS. RECENT APPLICATION OF ISA TO NON-COMMUNISTS, INCLUDING MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES, WHO MAY HAVE LENT THEMSELVES TO SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES, IS NOTEWORTHY IN OUR VIEW (BUT APPARENTLY NOT IN ANDELMAN'S), AS IT REPRESENTS DEPARTURE FROM PREVIOUS PRACTICE.

4. CLEARLY, ANDELMAN HAS RECOUNTED LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS IN MANNER SEEMINGLY CALCULATED (BY LIBERAL USE OF SUCH TERMS AS "REPRESSION", "COERCE" AND "DICTATORSHIP") TO PORTRAY GOS AS UNNECESSARILY AND UNJUSTIFIABLY HARSH AND AUTHORITARIAN. A SIGNIFICANT FLAW OF NYT PIECE MAY BE INFERENCE THAT GOS HAS BEEN WAGING ORCHESTRATED CAMPAIGN TO SILENCE ITS CRITICS (HERE AND IN MALAYSIA) AND LOCAL DISSIDENTS. WE BELIEVE IT POSSIBLE THAT DETENTIONS AND LEGAL ACTIONS REPRESENT DISCRETE INCIDENTS WHICH BY COINCIDENCE HAPPENED TO OCCUR IN RELATIVELY BRIEF PERIOD. MOREOVER, WHILE PROSECUTION AND OUTCOME OF SOME OF LEGAL CASES IN PARA 5, D., E., AND F. BELOW STRIKE MANY OBSERVERS AS EXTREME, CONFIDENTIAL

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GOS AND/OR PM LEE WERE ACTING WITHIN LOCAL LAWS. GOS ACTIONS HAVE SERVED VARIOUS PURPOSES. HOWEVER, ONE PRACTICAL EFFECT THEY TOGETHER HAVE HAD, AS ANDELMAN CORRECTLY CONCLUDES, HAS BEEN TO DISCOURAGE FURTHER THE ALREADY VITIATED POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND TO ABORT A FLEDGLING SINGAPORE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT.

5. FYI. BELOW WE REVIEW BRIEFLY POST-DECEMBER 1976 ELECTION DETENTIONS AND LEGAL PROCEEDINGS ONLY PARTIALLY COVERED BY ANDELMAN ARTICLE:

A. LAWYER G. RAMAN AND CIRCLE: RAMAN CONFESSED TO BEING A COMMUNIST AND TO MANIPULATING VARIOUS INDIVIDUALS TO HELP DISCREDIT GOS. ONE OF LATTER, FORMER FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW (FEER) REPORTER ARUN SENKUTTUVAN, ALLEGED THAT FEER ACTIVELY ABETTED THIS CAMPAIGN TO DISCREDIT GOS. (SINGAPORE TELEGRAMS 1331, 1078, 1007, 665, 601.)

B. LEONG MUN KWAI AND "BLACK OPERATION": LEONG, A BANKRUPT PEOPLES FRONT POLITICIAN, ALLEGED MALAYSIAN SPECIAL BRANCH (MSB) AND MALAYSIAN POLITICAL INTERFERENCE IN SINGAPORE ELECTION TO AID IN SLANDERING PM LEE KUAN YEW. (SINGAPORE TELEGRAMS 1078, 0874, 0810, 0777.)

C. CHAUVINISM CASES: SHAMSUDDIN TUNG, FORMER NANYANG SIANG PAO EDITOR, WAS DETAINED ELECTION NIGHT FOR ALLEGEDLY WAGING A "CHINESE CHAUVINIST" CAMPAIGN AS A UNITED FRONT (UF) CANDIDATE (SINGAPORE TELEGRAMS 777, 76 SN 5756, 76 SN 5724). HO JUAN THAI: THIS WORKERS PARTY (WP) CANDIDATE IS BEING SOUGHT BY ISD FOR QUESTIONING ABOUT REPUTED CHINESE CHAUVINISTIC REMARKS (SINGAPORE TELEGRAMS 0395, 0013).

D. CRIMINAL DEFAMATION CASES: TWO UNITED FRONT (UF) CONFIDENTIAL

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CANDIDATES, ONE UF SUPPORTER, ONE BARISAN SOSIALIS SUPPORTER, AND ONE WP SUPPORTER (LEONG MUN KWAI) HAVE BEEN CONVICTED OF CRIMINALLY DEFAMING PM LEE FOR HAVING ALLEGED THAT HE IS CORRUPT (SINGAPORE TELEGRAMS 0541, 0013).

E. CIVIL SLANDER CASES: ONE BARISAN SUPPORTER, SUED BY PM LEE, WAS FINED S\$100,000 FOR DEFAMATION, WHILE A SIMILAR CASE AGAINST WP SECRETARY GENERAL JEYARETNAM IS PENDING (SINGAPORE TELEGRAMS 1247, 0395). (NOTE: PRACTICAL EFFECT OF THESE CIVIL SUITS WOULD BE TO REMOVE THE DEFENDANTS FROM THE POLITICAL ARENA, IF CURRENT GOS PROPOSAL TO BAN BANKRUPTS FROM POLITICAL ACTIVITY BECOMES LAW.)

F. HO KWON PING: A FORMER FEER REPORTER, HO WAS CONVICTED FOR POSSESSING CONTROLLED INFORMATION ABOUT SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES, FINED S\$7,500 AND RELEASED. SUBSEQUENT TO ARUN SENKUTTVAN'S CONFESSION, HO WAS AGAIN DETAINED FOR QUESTIONING CONCERNING HIS WORK WITH FEER (SINGAPORE TELEGRAMS 540, 451, 395).  
END FYI.  
BLOCH

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